

REMARKS

Applicant has canceled claims 40, 42, 47, and 48 and have amended claims 1, 10, 25, 29, 41, and 43 as set forth above. No new matter has been added by way of these amendments. Applicant notes with appreciation the Office's indication that claims 17, 19-24, 33 and 35-39 are allowed over the prior art of record and claims 40-43, 47 and 48 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. In view of the above amendments and the following remarks, reconsideration of the outstanding office action is respectfully requested.

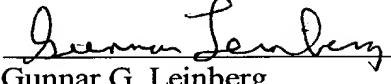
The Office has rejected claims 1-3, 6, 8-12, 15, 16, 25-27, 29-31, 44 and 45 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over US Patent No. 6,686,961 to Kudo et al. (Kudo) in view of US Patent No. 5,057,913 to Nagata et al. (Nagata), claims 4, 5, 13, 14, 28 and 32 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kudo in view of and Applicant's conceded prior art, claims 7 and 46 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kudo in view of Nagata and US Patent No. 5,805,213 to Spaulding et al. (Spaulding). Additionally, the Office has objected to claims 40-43, 47 and 48 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Accordingly, Applicant has amended independent claim 1 to substantially incorporate the subject matter of allowable dependent claim 40, independent claim 10 to substantially incorporate the subject matter of allowable dependent claim 42, independent claim 25 to substantially incorporate the subject matter of allowable dependent claim 47, and independent claim 29 to substantially incorporate the subject matter of allowable dependent claim 48. Additionally, Applicant has cancelled claims 40, 42, 47, and 48 and has amended claim 41 to depend from amended claim 1 and claim 43 to depend from amended claim 10. in view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, the Office is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw the above-noted rejections and objections.

In view of all of the foregoing, Applicant submits that this case is in condition for allowance and such allowance is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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